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H.E. Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, President of Italy
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Featuring:

H.E. Sergio Vento,
Ambassador of Italy to the United States of America

*****BECAUSE OF THE NEED TO RETURN TO ITALY FOR FUNERAL PROCESSIONS, THE ITALIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES, SERGIO VENTO WILL BE SPEAKING IN PLACE OF PRESIDENT CIAMPI*****

H.E. SERGIO VENTO (Prepared Remarks by H.E. Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, President of the Republic of Italy)— Ladies and Gentlemen,

I regret not being able to be with you today. I had been looking forward to our meeting.

Five days ago in Iraq, our carabinieri, military and civilians lost their lives in the tragic attack at Nassirya. I have to fly back to Italy earlier than I had anticipated to their solemn commemoration. Their mission, together with the allies of the multinational coalition, was to bring peace and stability to that country. Terrorism did not spare their lives.

New York knows terrorism only too well. Before leaving I visited Ground Zero. I saw the price your city has paid.

I return to Italy with strengthened confidence in the transatlantic relations. The very threat of terrorism, looming on our people, on our cities, makes it indispensable the solidarity that has been with us for over half a century.

I thank President Lateef for allowing me to speak to you, in absentia, and Ambassador Vento for bringing to you my words.

European integration and the alliance with the United States are deeply rooted

convictions in the Italian people. They have steered us safely ahead for over 50 years, they inspire us for the future.

Idealism and concrete political participation are the driving forces of the transatlantic relationship.

Grounded on solid shared values, our relationship has guaranteed peace and stability to Europe. It has enhanced freedom and democracy, it has consolidated our prosperity, and it has made it possible to spread the values of freedom and democracy throughout every part of the continent.

The end of the Cold War has not diminished the centrality of that relationship. We have seen it at work in the Balkans. We will see it at work against terrorism.

The Atlantic community is the common legacy of a great generation of farsighted Americans and Europeans. Belonging to it entails unchanged responsibilities and duties, not to be relinquished.

The United States and Europe share historic missions: we have jointly overcome the clashes of the 20th century; together we shall address the challenges of the 21st.

Huge changes will define the world stage and the power relations between nations, as new large powers emerge. Their signs are already clearly outlined.

The more unstable and treacherous the world around us, the more we must work together for the governability of the international system.

We are familiar with the challenges: terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, organised crime, poverty and the despair caused by the North-South divide, the rise in massive unchecked waves of migration, the unpredictable effects of climate change, and the often short-sighted exploitation of the world's natural resources.

Some of these threats have already proved devastating: first and foremost, just at the dawn of the new century, international terrorism symbolised by the heinous attack on the Twin Towers. It was an attack not only against America, but also against the West as a whole, and against the international order. As for other threats we can only anticipate their devastating potential.

All will require a renewed and even more steadfast joint American and European commitment: political, cultural, intellectual and military joint commitment.

I have had the privilege of living a long life. I was raised in a Europe fraught with nationalism and dictatorship, and lived through the Second World War. I witnessed the dawn of European unity, and I still have vivid memories of the vital contribution that the United States made to bringing down totalitarianism, and to Europe's recovery.

These events are engraved in our minds. European unity and the defence of freedom, embodied in the Euro-Atlantic solidarity, is the banner of my own generation.

European integration is a goal that a few enlightened figures had the strength to envisage as long ago as the Thirties, in a continent overshadowed by the sinister spectre of dictatorship. That idea took full and tangible form after the Second World War.

We could never have achieved the ideal of a united Europe without the commitment of the United States to defend freedom and democracy, and without its encouragement to move forward along the path of unification.

The United States and Europe are the twin souls of Western civilisation.

The West is a set of values based on the common yearning for freedom and for respect for all human beings.

NATO has been and remains the framework within which our relations and our common goals have been given substance.

Persevering along the path of cooperation between Europe and the United States, without ever giving up our shared aims and desire to work together, is as necessary today, and even more so, as it was fifty years ago.

European unity is a necessity: by European choice, and also in the American interest.

The political integration of Europe was thought out and initiated by six countries, as a project of freedom and democracy. It has now become the common heritage of over 450 million people.

They have acted on a simple and pragmatic idea: the ever-more close coordination of resources and legal systems, the pooling of sovereignty, the construction of supranational institutions to achieve this end, in some cases along federal lines, such as the European Central Bank, and in others on a confederal basis.

The Constitutional Treaty, which the European Union is about to adopt, will meanwhile provide greater unity, consistency, and transparency to the Europeans' decision to live together.

It makes the European Union a fully-fledged political player. It will make it possible to fully achieve a common European identity.

We know that this will demand great commitment and confidence of success.

The European Constitution, by virtue of its approach and substance, can be easily understood in the United States: especially where it appeals to "unity in diversity" in the Preamble, where it defines the Union as a Union of peoples and States.

We believe and hope that the European Constitution will be a factor of renewed trust between America and Europe.

It offers the United States more stable counterparts: a President of the Commission elected by the European Parliament; a President of the Council with a long term of office; and the newly instituted European Foreign Affairs Minister.

Not only Americans must trust the European integration; now, looking at Europe, they will see that what they have long championed and advocated in our continent is finally taking place.

We know our common history, but the future binds us together more than the past. We share hopes and fears when we cast our eyes towards the future.

No country, not even the United States, can address all the global challenges alone. No country has unlimited material and intangible resources.

A united Europe will balance different voices.

Only a Europe that is capable of speaking with a single voice can become an effective partner. A united Europe will commit itself with the United States in successfully taking on the challenges that lie ahead of us.

We may have differences; they will not prevent us from dealing with them successfully. The interest of the United States and of Europe is complementary; we share the interest that affects the lives of our citizens, the interests that matter.

We must focus on our common tasks and goals, through an intense process of consultation.

We worked together, successfully, with shared aims during the decades of the Cold War. We prevented the danger of the Third World War.

Together, in recent times, we halted the ethnic massacres in Bosnia in 1995 and in Kosovo in 1999. Together, we addressed, and are continuing to address, now under NATO command, the threat of terrorism in Afghanistan and its civil reconstruction. Together we operate to overcome the North-South divide.

Together, we are threatened by international terrorism; together, we are engaged in the struggle to eradicate it.

Together, European Union and United States, we are committed to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is the real key to establishing a balance and peace to the whole of the Middle East.

We operate together for the stabilization of Iraq, for its economic and civilian reconstruction- of Iraq, for the shared goal of a timely and orderly transition of powers to fully representative Iraqi Government.

Italy has always been convinced of the need to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons; we are making a renewed common effort in this vital area.

We need to enhance cooperation and dialogue: no global problem can be solved without, first of all, the commitment of the United States and the European Union,

together.

The United States should not harbour doubts about the development of European defence. For years you have been urging us to share the burden in this field.

European defence will gradually become a more substantial reality. To be credible its development must be in fully complementary with the Atlantic framework.

Concerning economic aspects, competition is a source of benefits to us all. But we are also interdependent: the United States and the European Union are their main partners in terms of trade and direct investment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

American and European democracy does not operate in separate ways, let alone against one another. Faced with the uncertainties and the complexities of the international situation, they are being asked to renew their historical linkage, on the basis of mutual respect and equal dignity.

Democracy and freedom have their strongest pillars in North America and Europe.

These are the foundations on which we can build together up a great-renewed common strategy within the framework of NATO and of the relations between the United States and the European Union, as well of our own bilateral relations.

We share an even more important goal: to join forces in a multilateral effort to re-enhance the central role of the United Nations.

To this end we must envisage the criteria – criteria that are both concrete and operational- that assure to the United Nations greater efficiency and capacity to respond effectively to the challenges of the XXI century.

Such criteria must be credible: they must update, as necessary, rules and directions but maintain the basic principles and multilateral framework; the interest of common good must prevail on narrow national interests.

In this spirit I had embarked upon this visit to the United States. These are the thoughts that have guided me in preparing for this meeting and these are the aspirations and the deep-seated convictions of the Italian people.

In this spirit I renew my regret for not being with you in person and I warmly thank you for your attention.